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Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Dave Cox, PIO: 360-772-6352

Priority distribution of H1N1 vaccine continues

Public health officials in Southwest Washington are working to distribute the H1N1 flu vaccine to clinics and hospitals as rapidly as the supply is made available for distribution.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had estimated that there would be a distribution of 40 million doses nationwide by October 30. They are now estimating this figure to be 29 million because of manufacturing issues.

Washington State Region 4, comprising Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties and the Cowlitz Tribe, has a total population of more than 530,000 people but has only received about 14,500 doses of H1N1 vaccine to date. This is enough vaccine for less than 3 percent of the population. Given the small initial shipments, health officials have determined that the best way to protect the public is to target vaccination efforts toward the most vulnerable populations.

Today, Region IV placed an order for 4,900 doses, the maximum amount allocated by the state for the region. Also today, Public Health delivered 550 doses of injectable H1N1 vaccine to pediatricians in the region to give to high-risk children. Tomorrow an additional 1500 doses of injectable H1N1 vaccine and 600 doses of H1N1 nasal mist will be provided to medical practices for high-risk children and health care providers.

Early vaccinations will be prioritized for pregnant women because they are at high risk of complications from H1N1; healthcare workers because they can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients and also because increased absenteeism among healthcare professionals could reduce healthcare system capacity; children ages 6 months to 19 years in congregate settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread; and parents and caregivers of children younger than 6 months, so they don't pass the virus to their infants.

Due to the current shortage, H1N1 vaccine will be distributed only to these groups. It is anticipated that over time an adequate supply of the vaccine will be available for every person in the four-county area. For more information, visit www.flunewsswwashington.org or call 1-877-510-2772.

